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AQIP Action Project Gen Ed Assessment 2014-2015 Summary

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The Higher Learning Commission Action Project Directory

University of Nebraska at Omaha: Assessment of General Education Student Learning Outcomes

Project Details

Title	Assessment of General Education Student Learning Outcomes	Status	IN REVIEW
Category	1 - Helping Students Learn	Updated	09-23-2015
Timeline		Reviewed	
	Planned Project Kickoff 09-02-2014	Created	10-01-2014
	Target Completion 08-29-2015	Last Modified	10-02-2015

1: *(Please answer the following questions in the text box below)*

General Project Status: _____ Completed _____ In-progress _____ Suspended _____ Reopened

Original Project Start Date: ____ / ____ / ____

Originally Projected End Date: ____ / ____ / ____

Anticipated Completion Date If Not Completed: ____ / ____ / ____

Briefly describe the current status of the project.

Explain how this project relates to any strategic initiatives or challenges described in the institution's most recent or soon-to-be submitted systems portfolio, if applicable:

A: General Project Status: Completed
 Original Project Start Date: 2014-09-02
 Originally Projected End Date: 2015-08-29
 Anticipated Completion Date if Not Completed: NA; is completed

Current Status:

This action project focused on designing and implementing the final steps in a new campus process for assessment of the University General Education student learning outcomes. The project achieved most of its project goals for 2014-2015. Critically, the project established an ongoing process for collecting, evaluating, and acting upon data. General Education is now part of the university assessment cycle. There is now an established University General Education Assessment Committee with clear roles and responsibilities including reporting to the University Assessment Committee. University General Education was identified as an opportunity for improvement/challenge in our last system's portfolio. The establishment of a University General Education Committee with clear responsibility and authority for the general education curriculum, the establishment of student learning outcomes for all areas of general education, and now a clear assessment process for the general education curriculum addresses many of the previous issues.

Relationship to Strategic Initiatives or Challenges: General Education Assessment had been identified in earlier feedback as needing attention.

2: **List the project goals as stated in the original project declaration along with the metrics/measures for assessing the progress for each goal. :**

A: The overarching goals of the project was to develop and implement an on-going assessment process for the university general education curriculum aligned with the UNO Assessment Cycle. Anticipated products and outcomes are listed below:
 General Education Assessment Timeline
 Pilot Reporting Template for Fundamental Academic Skills
 UNO Guide for the Assessment of University General Education Curriculum
 Preliminary reports on Fundamental Academic Skills
 Pilot rubric for evaluating reports
 Evaluation of Action Project and Next Steps for UNO General Education Assessment

3: Describe what has been accomplished with this project over the past year, specifically referring to quantifiable results that show progress. You may need to include a discussion clarifying how the original goals and anticipated outcomes may have shifted during the year.:

- A:** General Education Assessment Timeline: The assessment timeline was developed relatively easily and completed by December 2014. Campus-wide assessment for each area will occur on a 5 year time-line consistent with our academic program assessment and program review.
- Pilot Reporting Template for Fundamental Academic Skills: Developing the template took considerably longer than expected. This step actually become the major focus of the project for the past year. The project team spent considerable time developing the roles and responsibilities of the various units, faculty, campus committees for the assessment of the university general education curriculum. The committee reviewed and considered multiple models before eventually clarifying and adopting a multi-step process that we believe allows for meaningful assessment at the course and program level as well as clear campus oversight of the general education curriculum.
- While we have clear campus-wide student learning outcomes for the general education curriculum, the specific courses are offered in departments in all six of our academic colleges. In order to have meaningful assessment with curriculum and program improvements as a result of assessment, we needed to develop a process that fully engaged faculty and departments teaching the courses, oversight by the General Education Assessment Committee consistent with what the colleges agreed to in adopting the new university general education curriculum, and aligned with our recently enhanced and successful academic program assessment and review. While we eventually designed a pilot template, the most important aspect of the discussion and project was developing the pathway/process for the assessment.
- UNO Guide for the Assessment of University General Education Curriculum: This document is in development. This could not be completed until the process was fully clarified. While we have the basic information for the document, we are piloting with our fundamental academic competencies and will have a more formal document after completing that cycle.
- Preliminary reports on Fundamental Academic Skills: We are working with the respective units and these reports are in process. The project team also decided to consider these first reports "pilots" with an expectation that we likely will review fundamental academic skills before the next official scheduled review.
- Pilot rubric for evaluating reports: We have a rubric/feedback instrument to evaluate the preliminary reports.
- Evaluation of Action Project and Next Steps for UNO General Education Assessment: The committee has resumed its work for 2015-2016. The immediate next steps are to: (1) review CLA+ data in relation to our general education student learning goals and provide feedback to the relevant units; (2) complete the pilot review of fundamental academic competencies and determine if and when another report/review cycle takes place prior to the scheduled 5-year interval; and (3) initiate the social science review cycle for 2015-2016.

4: Describe how various members of the learning community have participated in this action project. Show the breadth of involvement by individuals and groups over the project's duration, particularly during the past year.:

- A:** The key groups engaged this past year included the University General Education Committee which includes representatives from all six colleges as voting members and non-voting members from Academic Affairs, Accreditation, Faculty Senate, Academic Advisors, Admissions, Registrar, and Information Services. The University General Education Assessment committee include a subgroup of the GE Committee as well as representatives from all of the above and the University Assessment Committee. All members of these committee understand a key component of their role is to connect the work of these committees to their colleges, units, and constituencies. Agendas and minutes of these meetings are distributed widely and any faculty and staff expressing interest in the topics are encouraged to attend.

5: Describe the effect that this project has had on the institution, students, and others in the learning community. What has the institution learned that can be identified as a good practice to use in other aspects of its quality work or from which other institutions might benefit? :

- A:** A key factor in the success of our overall general education initiative as well as the general education assessment has been a collaborative approach engaging faculty and staff from across the campus. The college representatives have been key in connecting the work of the committees to their colleges and departments. It is much more effective to have a faculty member from the college be aware of and actively engaged in not only developing policy and practices but also being a resource for other faculty in his/her college in responding to questions and concerns. We are adapting this strategy in our assessment process by designating/empowering faculty champions in each of the areas to facilitate the assessment at the course/program level.

6: Describe the anticipated challenges that may be encountered in successfully completing the project or for institutionalizing the learning from the project's goals. :

- A:** For relatively large, decentralized, public institutions, general education is a challenge. Faculty and administrators from UNO have attended AACU General Education Institutes, Assessment Conferences, and the HLC Assessment Workshop. These opportunities as well as the research we have done have been enormously helpful in identifying potential pitfalls as well as best practices. As we move into assessment of an area across multiple departments and colleges, we anticipate some challenges in coordination, assessment competency, and the time it takes to complete the entire process—especially the first time. We also anticipate that one result of the assessment process will be to review and refine our student learning outcomes. Resources will also be a challenge. As our general education assessment has progressed, it has become increasingly clear that we do not have adequate staff and budget support. While the work is getting done at this time, in order for the process to be sustainable and fully institutionalized, we will need to address resource needs.

7: In light of the project goals, current circumstances, institutional learning from this project, and anticipated barriers to success, list the next steps to be taken over the course of the next 12 - 24 months in order to complete or institutionalize the results of this action project. Provide a timeline for completing each next step.:

- A:** We will continue the work as follows:
Regular meetings of the University General Education Committee and Assessment Task Force—on-going
Review of CLA+ and feedback to campus and individual units—by December 2015.
Review and feedback of pilot Fundamental Academic Competencies Assessment—December 2015
Social Science Assessment cycle—begin Fall 2015 and complete by Fall 2016.

8: Provide any additional information, inquiries, or concerns that the institution wishes for reviewers to understand regarding this action project:

- A:** As it seems to be for many institutions, especially relatively large, public, and decentralized universities, general education assessment has been a work in progress. While we have made major changes and improvements since 2011, it has been an incremental process. We believe that establishing clear systems and processes for General Education (development and assessment of the curriculum), will enable us to be able to actually use the data from our assessment for curriculum improvements.